

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 HA-05 ACDA-12 IO-13 OMB-01

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NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 EB-08 NEA-11

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P R 291432Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 682

INFO DIA WASHDC

COMIPAC HONOLULU HI

OAU COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ANTANANARIVO 1216

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MILI, PEPR, MA, FR, UR

SUBJ: PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA GOES TO MOSCOW

REF: A) ANT 834; B) ANT 1011 AND PREVIOUS; C) 77 ANT 2206

AND 2317 (ALL NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA LEFT JUNE 28 FOR A PREVIOUSLY UNANNOUNCED VISIT TO MOSCOW. BEFORE DEPARTURE HE TOLD PRESS AT AIRPORT THAT TRIP WAS IN CONTEXT OF CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION WITH MADAGASCAR'S "OBJECTIVE ALLIES" IN THE FACE OF THE LATEST IMPERIALIST MANEUVERS TO DIVIDE AFRICA. THIS VISIT COULD RESULT IN MORE FORMAL TIES BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES, IN BOTH THE CIVIL AND MILITARY FIELDS, AND POSSIBLY INCLUDING SOVIET MILITARY USE OF MADAGASCAR'S DEEP WATER PORT OF DIEGO SUAREZ. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO RATSIRAKA'S WORDS AT THE AIRPORT HE IS RESPONDING TO A TWO YEAR OLD INVITATION FROM THE SOVIET UNION WHICH HE IS JUST NOW ABLE TO ACCEPT. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, THAT RATSIRAKA TIMED THIS VISIT TO BALANCE A PROJECTED VISIT TO FRANCE (REF A) WHICH WAS ORIGINALLY EXPECTED TO OCCUR AT ABOUT THIS TIME
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BUT WHICH HAS NOT YET BEEN SCHEDULED, POSSIBLY BECAUSE OF RECENT EVENTS IN ZAIRE AND THE COMOROS.

3. IF THE FRENCH VISIT WAS POSTPONED FOR POLITICAL REASONS THERE WAS NO SIMILAR REASON TO CALL OFF THE SOVIET TRIP. IN FACT THE TIMING OF THIS VISIT COMES AT A GOOD TIME FOR RATSIRAKA. EXTERNALLY THE IMPERIALIST THREAT, WHICH HE HAS BEEN DENOUNCING FOR A LONG

TIME, HAS, IN HIS EYES, COME PRETTY CLOSE TO HOME IN THE COMOROS AND THE SEYCHELLES. INTERNALLY HE HAS CHOSEN TO BLAME HIS TROUBLES IN THE FIELDS OF PUBLIC SECURITY AND THE ECONOMY ON IMPERIALIST SKULDUGGERY. HIS FAILURE TO MAKE ANY PROGRESS IN THE PRIORITY FIELDS WHICH HE HIMSELF DESIGNATED, LAW AND ORDER, RICE PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION, AND STRAIGHTENING OUT THE EDUCATIONAL SITUATION, HAS DIMISHED HIS STANDING WITH BOTH THE LEFT AND RIGHT. HIS ABSENCE FROM THE SCENE DURING AND AFTER THE DISORDERS OF JUNE 29-30 (REF B) COULD HAVE HARMED HIS AUTHORITY IN THE UPPER COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENT. HIS TRIP TO MOSCOW COULD SERVE TO REASSURE HIM ABOUT SOVIET SUPPORT IN THE FACE OF HIS CONCEPTION OF THE IMPERIALIST THREAT. IT COULD ALSO IMPROVE HIS STANDING WITH HIS LEFTIST OPPOSITION WHICH HAS BEEN CRITICAL OF HIS DELIBERATION IN ESTABLISHING A MORE EGALITARIAN SOCIETY IN MADAGASCAR.

4. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS TRIP COULD BE SERIOUS. IT MAY POSSIBLY RESULT IN CLOSER INSTITUTIONAL TIES BETWEEN THE USSR AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR (DRM), UP TO AND INCLUDING SIGNIFICANT SOVIET ARMS SUPPLIES AND SOVIET ACCESS TO THE PORT OF DIEGO SUAREZ. ALTHOUGH RATSIRAKA HAS REPEATED AS LATE AS LAST DECEMBER THAT HE WOULD NOT PERMIT SHIPS OF SUPERPOWERS TO VISIT MALAGASY PORTS, THERE IS NO OVERRIDING REASON WHY HE COULD NOT CHANGE HIS MIND(REF C). EVENTS IN AFRICA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN IN THE FIRST HALF OF 1978 HAVE GIVEN HIM AMPLE PRETEXTS TO CITE FOR A CHANGE OF POSITION ON THIS ISSUE. THERE IS IN THE FIRST PLACE THE JUSTIFICATION OF MOVING CLOSER TO THE SOVIETS TO ENHANCE THE IMMEDIATE

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SECURITY OF MADAGASCAR AGAINST THE PERCEIVED THREAT IN THE SW INDIAN OCEAN COCKPIT, NOT TO SPEAK OF HIS OWN STANDING IN MADAGASCAR. ON A LARGER SCALE HE CAN ALSO CITE THE POLARIZATION OF FORCES TAKING PLACE IN AFRICA AS A RESULT OF SHABA II. HE DWELT AT LENGTH ON THIS SUBJECT DURING HIS PREDEPARTURE PRESS INTERVIEW, SAYING THAT SINCE THE "OTHERS" MEET TO ADOPT A COMMON STRATEGY THE PROGRESSIVE STATES CAN DO THE SAME AND THAT HE WOULD, IF NECESSARY PROPOSE A MEETING OF PROGRESSIVE CHIEFS OF STATE, BEFORE THE OAU SUMMIT IF POSSIBLE. "FRANCO-AFRICAN PACT IS.... A MANEUVER TO DIVIDE AFRICA." "THEREFORE MY VISIT TO MOSCOW IS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COOPERATION NECESSARY WITH OBJECTIVE ALLIES..." "....IT IS NOT ONLY CONSULTATION OR EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BETWEEN AFRICAN PROGRESSIVES WHICH ARE NECESSARY, WE MUST ALSO COORDINATE OUR ACTIONS WITH COUNTRIES WHICH ARE OUR OBJECTIVE ALLIES, WHICH ARE OUR NATURAL ALLIES."

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED POSTS LISTED SECTION 2

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ANTANANARIVO 1216

DEPT PASS AMEMBASSY BANGUI AMEMBASSY GABORONE AMEMBASSY KIGALI
AMEMBASSY LOME AMEMBASSY MAPUTO AMEMBASSY MASERU AMEMBASSY
MBABANE AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

5.. THERE FOLLOW SUMMARIES OF RATSIRAKA'S COMMENTS ON OTHER SUBJECTS:

- .
- A) OAU-"FIRST JOB OF OAU IS TO PRESERVE ITS UNITY." HAVING SAID
THIS RATSIRAKA ALSO PROPOSED HIS MEETING OF PROGRESSIVE AFRICAN
CHIEFS OF STATE.
- B) SAHROUI-IF OTHER COUNTRIES LIKE MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA, AND
THEIR PARTISANS PREVENT A SPECIAL SUMMIT MEETING ON THIS QUESTION
THE SUBJECT SHOULD BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE NORMAL OAU SUMMIT.
- C) REUNION- I AM FOR AUTO-DETERMINATION FOR ALL PEOPLE. IF PEOPLE
OF REUNION WANT DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY WE WILL SUPPORT THEM; IF THEY
WANT INDEPENDENCE WE WILL SUPPORT THEM.
- D) AFRICAN DEFENSE PACT- I WOULD PARTICIPATE WILLINGLY IN SUCH
A PACT IF IT WERE DIRECTED AGAINST RHODESIA, SOUTH AFRICA, AND IS-
RAEL AND AT LIBERATING THE SAHARA.
- E) IMPERIALIST ACTIONS AGAINST MADAGASCAR-. A VERY STRANGE
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SPECT OF THIS PRESS CONFERENCE WAS RATISRAKA'S LENGTHY COMMENTARY
ON TWO STOWAWAYS WHO RECENTLY JUMPED SHIP IN MADAGASCAR AND WERE
ARRESTED (ONE YUGOSLAVE AND ONE BULGARIAN). RATSIRAKA SAID THAT

IN HIS OPINION THEY ARE REALLY MERCENARIES WHO CAME ESPECIALLY TO BE ARRESTED AND TO ASSASSINATE SOME MALAGASY OFFICERS PRESENTLY UNDER DETENTION FOR PLOTTING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. MOTIVE WAS TO PREVENT THESE OFFICERS FROM TESTIFYING AT THEIR FORTHCOMING TRIAL ABOUT THEIR FOREIGN ACCOMPLICES. BUT, SAID THE PRESIDENT, WE ALREADY KNOW WHO THESE ARE AND WHAT COUNTRIES ARE INVOLVED. TO PROVE HIS THEORY THE PRESIDENT PULLED OUT OF HIS ATTACHE CASE A COMBINATION FOUNTAIN-PEN AND GUN WHICH HE SAID HAD BEEN FOUND ON ONE OF THE MEN AND EXPLAINED ITS WORKINGS TO HIS BUG-EE EYED AUDIENCE.

6. ANNOUNCED AS ACCOMPANYING THE PRESIDENT ON HIS TRIP ARE MRS. RATSIRAKA, FOREIGN MINISTER RICHARD, FINANCE MINISTER RAZAKABOANA, MINISTER OF CULTURE GISELE RABESAHALA, PRESIDENTIAL SPECIAL ASSISTANT SOLOFOSON, AND MEMBERS OF THE SUPREME REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL JUSTIN RAKOTONIAINA (FORMER PRIME MINISTER) AND JEAN FERLIN FIAKARA. ALSO IN THE PARTY BUT NOT ANNOUNCED IS SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE DEFENSE MINISTRY, LT COL. RASOMALALA. BARRETT

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE POSTS

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